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A Sartrean Existentialist Look at Bach's *Illusions: The Adventures of Reluctant Messiah*

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ABSTRACT. Primarily introduced through the works of a Danish scholar Søren Kierkegaard in nineteenth century, existentialism is in fact a socio-personal philosophy, which assumes man as radically free, while he is captivated in the inevitable chains of social responsibilities and commitments. Existentialism disregards the established traditional values, and emphasizes an individual's choice and free will while compelling him to confront his duplicities and to take responsibility of them. For existentialists, being-in-the-world defines experience. Following Sartrean notion of whether you are present here and now or you are off in an illusive state, an existentialist would not ask, Who you are? rather he focuses on Where you are?. Thus existentialism gives priority to existence not essence. This article investigates the significant trends of the twentieth century existentialism with regard to Sartrean notion of the term and applies existentialism and the notion of individualistic and social illusions to Richard Bach's *Illusions: The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah* which questions the authenticity of reality from the view point of the central character.

"We live in illusion and the appearance of things. There is a reality. We are that reality. When you understand this, you see that you are nothing, and being nothing, you are everything. That is all." – Kalu Rinpoche (2012)

1. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MODERN EXISTENTIALISM

Being the modernized legitimate child of Descartes' philosophy, which argued "I think, therefore I am", [Existentialism] argued "I can say No, therefore I exist" (Bigelow 172). Influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche's advice to "become what you are" (Amiri Senejani 15), along with other findings of Blaise Pascal, and Karl Jasper, existentialism is viewed as "a philosophical trend, tendency or attitude, as distinct from a particular dogma or system . . . [referring to the] 'loose term' used to describe a diversity of thinkers who resonated with Kierkegaard's rally against Hegel's abstract Rationalism in the early 1800s" (Sanderson 2). Defining existentialism as a philosophy, which is "to be lived, something to be proven in action" (Sanderson 2), Sartrean existentialism comes to agreement with other variations of existentialism solely in this "notion that 'being' has to take precedence over (rationalist) 'knowledge' in philosophical investigations" (Sanderson 2). However, it is interesting to note that existentialism regards it as vital that "[m]uch value is placed on the idea of the 'aware self' as a thinking being which has beliefs, hopes, fears, desires, the need to find a purpose, and a will that can determine their actions" (Sanderson 3). Such arguments makes it crystal clear of "why existentialism is generally opposed to rationalist and empiricist doctrines that understand the universe as a determined, ordered system in which rationality and natural laws govern all beings and guide human activity" (Sanderson 3). However, it must be mentioned that existentialism believes "that rational clarity is desirable wherever possible, but that the most important questions in life are not accessible to (sic) reason or science" (Sanderson 3), in the

meantime putting “great significance on such emotions as anguish, anxiety and dread” (Amiri Senejani 16).

Borrowing its linguistic roots from an English-French word “existence,” the theory emerged as a twentieth century phenomenon denoting an active quality which is highly “dependent on the Latin root *ex* ‘out’+ *sister* from *star* ‘to stand’” (Amiri Senejani 15). Referring to existentialism, as belonging to the same category of *isms*, further extension of each *ism* must be vitally considered. Hence, based on religious criterions, existentialism can be grouped into “two main kinds, the ungodly and the godly” (Bigelow 171), the leading figures of the first category were Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and Simone de Beauvoir, with whom “the spirit of resistance, the un-extinguishable ability to say ‘No’” identifies (Bigelow 171). “Sartre or Camus express the new content in the old convention” Esslin says (17). The Godly or the theistic existentialism emerged with the writings of the “a mid-nineteenth century Danish writer, Søren Kierkegaard and continued with works of Gabriel Marcel and Jacques Maritain. It is worth noting that the works of these theistic existentialists “constitute one of the most significant developments in modern theology” (Bigelow 172).

Considering the discussion of various sub-branches of *isms*, the great French scholar Jean-Paul Sartre (1905 - 1980) introduces his own version of existentialism, which must be studied only as one variation of existentialism in its holistic sense. To view the existentialism’s philosophical trend from the twentieth century sociopolitical perspective, having a quick review on socio-historical events of the century seems inevitable. The movement began with the liberation of Paris in August 1944 as following the publication of Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness* and France’s first experience of freedom after four years of German occupation (Michelman 13). However, demands of a socially free France had not been proposed so vividly until the publication of the first issue of *Les temps modernes*:

Announced to the public Sartre’s existentialist agenda. Existentialism was a philosophy of radical individual freedom, responsibility, and social commitment; it sought to expose the hypocrisy of traditional, ‘serious’ values and to replace them with a doctrine of individual choice and creation. By compelling people to confront their ‘duplicities’ and to ‘assume responsibility’ for themselves ‘without excuses’. (Michelman 14)

As a “High Priest” of existentialism (Michelman 15), Sartre interestingly introduced a modern notion in one of his primary lectures considering itself with the significant socio-personal scope of existentialism through providing his audience with a definition of existential honesty or authenticity:

An ideal of existential ‘honesty’ or ‘authenticity’ derived from Heidegger and from Kierkegaard. He observed that existence is suffused with ‘anguish’ (angoisse, anxiety) over the responsibility we must assume for our freedom. Anxiety, in turn, along with the freedom and responsibility it heralds, may be embraced with ‘honesty’ or, more commonly, it may be denied and ‘fled from with dishonesty’. Existential dishonesty consists in acting as if one were determined by circumstances or by one’s emotions, or as if one’s choices were ordained by preexisting values. Existential honesty consists in acting in full awareness of one’s freedom to create value and meaning without reference to external authority. Moreover, Sartre insisted, it requires the realization that one’s freedom ‘depends entirely on the freedom of others, and that the freedom of others depends on ours’. (qtd in Michelman, 14)

Referring back to Sartre’s notion of existential honesty, one finds out that he disregards the previous deterministic belief by proposing that “the past does not determine the present, because the present is continually being remade through human choice and action. He emphasized taking responsibility for the past but at the same time held open the possibility of future renewal,” (qtd in Michelman 15) which in turn acted as a fresh blood for the physically and spiritually suffered people of the post-war France.

To reflect upon the two socio-culturally significant areas of literature and art, it must be noted that existentialism emerged through introducing the recurring themes of alienation, absurdity and anxiety, as “existentialist ethos” (Michelman 15) to the art of the twentieth century; the best classic example of which can be found in Albert Camus’s *The Stranger*. Also, “the sculptures of Alberto Giacometti, and the plays of Samuel Beckett” (Michelman 15), are among other instances of an existentialist art. It must be bear in mind that existentialism seeks to show the idea of absurdity in life and existence, through disregarding God as the ultimate power and the sole source of creation and the answer to all the unknowns, by proposing that it is the human psyche and his consciousness, which makes us capable of making meaning in a way that it rejects any other intelligence existing other than that of human consciousness and intellectuality.

However, there are certain serious differences with regard to both scholars. Sartrean existentialism “places the human subject at the creative center of the world to the exclusion of any extra-human dimension, his own thought casts humans in a receptive and responsive relationship with thought, language, and tradition, with the “Being” that “claims,” while Heidegger’s version of existentialism concerns itself with a “metaphysics of the subject” (Michelman 17), exalting the powers of the human being to know, act upon, create, and control an encompassing reality. In Heidegger’s view, true humanism would have to begin by re-thinking the meaning of the human being not as the subject of action and thought, ranging over a world of external objects, rather than “openness to Being” (Michelman 17).

Still, Sartre theorizes that “the fundamental choice man makes and gives direction to his life, is made by reflecting his previous life up to present. In other words we’ve already made our choice implicitly” (Flynn 12), hence, it demands a “sense of active engagement in the world” (Mart 50), in which an individual is free. In case of a dynamic participation in our act, Sartre asserts “[w]e are aware . . . that the pressures and demands that the world presents to us are the result of the ways in which we see and engage with things, and that this in turn is the result of our changeable characters rather than any fixed natures” (qtd in Mart 51).

2. SARTRE'S EXISTENTIALIST KEY CONCEPTS

Philosophically speaking, Socrates is the most influential philosopher of antiquity for Kierkegaard and the following existential theorists like Sartre; even though each belongs to opposing groups in terms of religious beliefs. However, in general terms, many critics believe that the original version of existentialism has its roots in the religious philosophical theories of the nineteenth century Danish scholar, Søren Kierkegaard, who founded a firm basis for the flourishing of the existential philosophy in the following century. The so-called modernized version of the philosophy does not seek to “clarify general structure of what is – existence in its broadest sense – by appealing to a prior and intelligible order that imbues it with its sense”, or to objectify its traditional counterpart. Rather, as Sartre puts in his *Being and Nothingness*, “the essence . . . is no longer opposed to being but on the contrary is the measure of it” (qtd in Han, 66).

Jonathan Webber interestingly refers to Sartre’s key concepts of existentialism as ‘aesthetic existentialism’. In his *The Existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre*, he stipulates: “existence precedes essence, abandonment, absolute individuality and absolute freedom, subjectivity of values, responsibility for choice, anxiety, despair, the self and bad faith” (qtd in Mart 51), however, it is believed that “in man, and in man alone, existence precedes essence” (Mart 50). Sartre in his *Existentialism and Humanism* theorizes:

There is no human nature since there is no God to conceive of it. Man is not only that which he conceives himself to be, but that which he wills himself to be . . . man is nothing other than what he makes of himself. (qtd in Mart 50)

Being a true follower of Nietzsche’s pagan heresy, Sartre also refers to existentialist art as being largely “devoted to expressing the absurdity of the human condition” (Mart 50). He further provides us with a clearer image of his existence and essence by proposing a division of the things that “exist into three kinds: human beings, artifacts, and naturally occurring objects. In the case of human beings, existence precedes essence. In the case of artifacts, essence precedes existence and

in the case of naturally occurring objects, existence and essence coincide” (qtd in Mart 51). He believes that in case of essence priority over the existence, the primary question to be asked is *what is it?* rather than *is it?* Sartre exemplifies that in the “case of naturally occurring objects, such as stones and trees, their beings do not predate their being what they are. In the case of human beings, Sartre means there is no predetermined human essence and there is no human nature fixed in advance of human existence” (Priest 25). One of the most important trends of Sartrean existentialism lies in his idea of fundamental mannerism of being as “being-for-itself and being-in-itself”, meaning that being-for-itself is subjective being and being-in-itself is objective being. “Being-for-itself is the kind of being that pertains to one’s own existence. Being-in-itself is the manner in which the world external to one’s own reality exists. Being-for-itself entails the existence of consciousness, and consciousness of itself. Because it entails consciousness, it entails that directedness towards the world called ‘intentionality’ which consciousness entails. Being-for-itself is free and entails a kind of lack or nothingness” (Priest 115). Sartre further clarifies the point through exemplifying that “I am a kind of nothingness because there is nothing that I am independently of my self-constitution through those choices,” meaning that “Being-in-itself is opaque, objective, inert and entails a massive fullness or plentitude of being. Being-in-itself is uncreated, meaning that although it is, it never began to be and there is no cause and no reason for it to be” (qtd in Priest 117).

Sartrean existentialism consists of certain interconnected notions with those of the general existentialist themes. To have a quick review on these concepts, one should primarily begin with Sartre’s most controversial theory of the human beings’ existential precedence over essence. Sartre argues that “a man *lives* (has existence) rather than *is* (has being or essence), and that every man’s experience of life is unique . . . It strenuously shuns that view which assumes an ideal of Man or Mankind, a universal of human nature of which each man is only one example” (Bigelow 172). Sartre further seeks to bring a reciprocal treatment to the ancient Greek philosophical question of *What is Mankind?* by proposing the question of *Who am I?* which suggests the “uniqueness and mystery of each human life and its emphasis upon the subjective or personal rather than the objective and impersonal” reality (Bigelow 172). Sartrean existentialism also takes side with D.H. Lawrence’s notion of fragmentation and his outburst against Franklin on his attempt to bring perfection to man when responds: “The perfectibility of Man! . . . The perfectibility of which man? I am many men. Which of them are you going to perfect?” (qtd in Bigelow 173), which in psychological levels, suggests the existence of multiple beings living within an individual.

Sartre introduces rationality or reason as the second factor in his version of existentialism to reflect upon the depth of human existence, through a binary discussion: “[F]irst that human reason is relatively weak and imperfect, and second, that there are dark places in human life which are ‘non-reason’ [non-rational] and to which reason scarcely penetrates” as contradictory to the former “glorifi[cation of] reason as suited to command the non-rational part” (Bigelow 172). He further associates this part with a favorable place to cultivate human emotions, passions and appetites to which Plato refers, in his *Republic* as “the allegory of the cave” which degrades an individual to an “animal form” (Bigelow 172) and imprisons him in the darkness of the cave. However, contrary to Plato’s argument, Sartrean existentialism “insists upon reuniting the ‘lower’ or irrational parts of the psyche with the ‘higher’. As Bigelow (1961) puts it, man must be defined in his holistic sense, including his rational and emotional drives and powers, which sometimes overlap each other. Sartre’s existentialism maintains an individual’s “contingency and fallibility, his frailty, his body, blood, and bones, and above all his death” as true, while reflecting upon Kierkegaard’s insistence on “the distinction between subjective truth (what a person is) and objective truth (what a person knows)” (Bigelow 173). We encounter our true selves, who we really are through a dynamic involvement of the rational part of our psyche, which in turn causes a sense of distrust towards the “rational system” (Bigelow 173).

The third concept in Sartre’s existentialism deals with alienation or estrangement, as a logical consequence of the emergence and the growth of natural science; in its modern sense it has “progressively separated man from concrete earthly existence . . . [a sense of alienation] from God

[as had been proposed previously by Nietzsche's declaration that 'God is dead'], from nature, from other men, from his own true self" which further causes "spiritual barrenness" (Bigelow 173). Sartre assumes a three-level phase for this concept; beginning with alienation from God, continuing to alienation from nature and away from the "steel walls of technology" with an emphasis on man's return "to concreteness or wholeness" and finally the "third estrangement has occurred at the social level and its sign is a growing dismay at man's helplessness before the great machine-like colossus of industrialized society" as the social dimension of the man's alienation from his true self (Bigelow 174), which Bigelow refers to as a process of "Exteriorization," making mankind alienated by enslaving him to the modern materialism.

Sartre's theory of existentialism deals with the depression after the Second World War; a great depression or the so-called anxiety as the fourth factor which is best defined by William Faulkner: "[o]ur tragedy today is a general and universal physical fear so long sustained by now that we can ever bear it . . . the sense of dismay which the loss of these ideals [the nineteenth century image of ideal man] brought, but only with the atomic bomb did this unbearable terror, a threat of instant annihilation which confronted all men" (qtd in Bigelow 175). However, in line with Kierkegaard, Bigelow (1961) points out that Sartre has shifted the direction of existential anxiety toward a new scope; "the anguish of Abraham [violating the religiously abstract law of altruism in sacrificing his beloved son, for the greater love of God] – the necessity which is laid upon him to make moral choices on his own responsibility" (175).

The fifth factor deals with Absurdism, the nothingness as a direct result of man's alienation from those three previous notions of God, nature and fellow man/his true self, as characterized through Eliot's depiction of Hollow Man in his *Wasteland*: "who is a shape without form, shade without color, paralyzed force, gesture without motion" (qtd in Bigelow 176). Interestingly enough, Kafka also refers to this state as "devoid of purpose . . . cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost. All his actions become senseless, absurd, and useless" (qtd in Amiri Senejani 16). The sixth to be discussed is freedom. Sartre's theory of existentialism is based on ultimate freedom. He believes that "I am condemned to exist forever beyond my essence, beyond the causes and motives of my act . . . This means that no limits to my freedom can be found except freedom itself" (Mart 51).

Sartre argues that "Freedom is perceived as a burden rather than as liberation, and inevitably connected to dread" (qtd in Vaughan 6). In terms of moral aspects, existentialism proposes that "one behaves ethically out of one's own convictions rather than unquestioning obedience to external rules. This implies recognizing that some attitudes and behaviors are more beneficial than others, i.e. some reduce suffering while others increase suffering, and taking responsibility for one's experience" (Vaughan 6). Also, an interrelating concept of free will as "the source of both liberation and trepidation" (Sanderson 3) is defined as a natural outcome of Sartrean notion of freedom. In line with what has been mentioned, Bigelow notes that freedom for those atheist existentialists like Sartre means "human autonomy;" that "man is condemned to freedom . . . precisely because there is no God to give purpose to the universe, each man must accept individual responsibility for his own becoming", however the religious existentialist party has always insisted on "the man of faith rather than the man of will" (177).

It is noteworthy to pinpoint that Sartrean concept of freedom and responsibility emerges from his doctrine of the precedence of existence over the essence. Sartre believes that "human consciousness, or being-for-itself, differs from inanimate objects, or a being-in-itself, since humans have the ability to choose and define their individual characteristics, or essence . . . The fear and anxiety of this responsibility leads many people to ignore both their freedom and their responsibility by letting other people make their choices for them, resulting in bad faith" (Amiri Senejani 23).

Finally the last existential element to deal with is the concept of time in existentialism. Sartrean existentialism refers to the notion of time, as being relative and variable, even though many critics argue that human beings are "fundamentally time-bound beings" (Amiri Senejani 16). Yet, Sartrean existentialism regards an individual's lived time as "qualitative: the 'not yet', and the 'present' differ among themselves in meaning and value," (Amiri Senejani 16) meaning that

existentialistic time is uniquely subjective. It can operate as dynamic for one, while being static for the other.

3. DISCUSSION: EXISTENTIALISM, SOCIAL ILLUSION AND BACH'S ILLUSIVE ADVENTURE

Studying *Illusions: The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah* from Sartrean existential perspective makes one think that how a materialistically rooted existential philosophy is able to provide us with a convincing discussion of an individual's supernatural abilities of the psyche, naming one's illusions, which are "simultaneously dependent and independent on time", and also "defined by society" (Shukshina 1460). Philosophers of antiquity, such as Plato and Aristotle, act as inspiration for the modern existential grandsons, naming Albert Camus, Søren Kierkegaard, Gabriel Marcel, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Martin Heidegger by introducing them the socio-psychological phenomenon providing them with apprehension of an individual's illusions. Social illusions "in its essence is an existential value not only for a single individual but for society in general" (Shukshina 1461).

Richard Bach's *Illusion: The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah* is a novel in which the author manages to suggest the probability of an illusion through questioning the authenticity of the reality from the view point of his characters. The story opens up with Donald Shimoda's self-proclamation of Messiah and his friendship with Richard, to whom he decides to pass his knowledge. A famous quotation from the novel says: "here is a test to find whether your mission on earth is finished: if you are alive, it isn't" (Bach 60). The quotation shows an intimate connection with Sartre's idea of existential precedence, in a way that both refer to the concept of an experimental living, not being, as the primary purpose of life and as a counterpart to the famous existentialist concept of I think, therefore I am; an existence which demands an active participation that can happen either in physical or psychological levels. Very much like Sartre, Bach rejects the idea of a pre-determined future; Bach later on emphasizes the sufficiency of man's existential nature as the sole guiding power, operating as being-for-itself, by bringing an anti-materialistic existentialist discussion that "you [the character – an individual] are led through your lifetime by the inner learning creatures, the playful spiritual being that is your real self. Don't turn away from possible futures before you are certain . . . you're always free to change your mind and choose a different future" (Bach 25).

Shukshina (2013) believes that "illusions are inadequate concepts of subjects, phenomena, and outward world; while others consider social illusions as false ideas of humans, human religious faiths and associate them with religion. Most frequently illusions are identified with misconceptions, myths, and utopias". In fact, it is assumed that illusions are the inability and incapability of human psyche in perception of the truth, in its general sense; therefore it is "a quality of internal reality of a human" (Shukshina 1462). In terms of myth and ideals, scholars refer to utopias as a social ideal, which is the product of illusive imagination and "[s]ince the utopias are an ideal of desired society . . . the only possible world view can be considered as myth. Myth is the existing part in human consciousness and owns the image of world including both true and false concepts" (Shukshina 1461).

To reflect on the concept of illusion, twentieth century scholars pointed out to the various opposing dimensions of reality, as not correlating, hence, making it "obvious that it is impossible to recognize society or individual only by means of rational methods, thus, the phenomenon of social illusions comes to the fore" (Shukshina 1461). Socialists argue:

Social illusions are an existential value having cognitive, emotional, volitional, therapeutic, archetypal – ethno cultural invariant . . . The social illusions are a form of cognition and action of an individual in possible social realities. The social illusions are the expression of human essence in action, capable to carry out self-deception and deception of others with the aim of survival and obtaining of self-purposes . . . Performing identification and identity, the social illusions as an existential value of life produce excessive energy which facilitates resistance against environment pursuing a better life. (Shukshina 1462)

Following what has been discussed in the previous lines about the social scope of the illusion with regard to religious and humanistic matters, Wilber, best explains the issue of illusion and consciousness in the individuals: “human beings do in fact have access to three general realms of being and knowing—the sensory, the mental and the spiritual . . . [namely:] subconscious, self-conscious, and super-conscious, or pre-rational, rational and trans-rational” (qtd in Vaughan 4). However, he believes that the controversial point lies in the recognition of the boundaries that separate these realms, within each individual.

To view existentialism from a transpersonal scope, “a sense of being real is commonly associated with a commitment to authenticity and personal freedom. Whereas the egocentric hero sets out to conquer the world, the existential hero seeks to face reality and conquer fear through attitudes such as resoluteness and authenticity” (Vaughan 4). It is asserted that for an individual to reach psychological transcendence, existence must precede, however, for this to happen, primarily an individual must recognize himself as an “independent totality”, conscious of his existence and fully “engaged in a process of relational exchange at all levels of awareness: spiritual, existential, mental, emotional and physical” (Vaughan 5); meaning that “the existential identity must be established before it can be transcended” (Vaughan 5). However, existentialists tend to deny claims of transcendence of humanistic experience and illusion, by questioning the authenticity of the experience from an empirical point. This is the significant stage, where Sartre opposes to and diverges from the general existential mainstream.

In opposition to all mechanically oriented empirical sciences which tend to propose that “man would be defined by the bundle of drives or tendencies which empirical observation could establish” (Sartre 713), Sartre argues that desire is an internal issue within a human being, “by virtue of being ‘contained’ by his consciousness, thus believing that ‘the meaning of the desire is inherent in the desire itself’ (Han 69). Sartre further takes advantage of this argument, to reflect upon the notion of existential precedence, by referring to man as “a non-substantial absolute . . . the person in its totality” (Han 70), a unity not a collage, which must not be “analyzed and reduced to original givens, to determined desires (or “drives”), supported by the subject as properties of an object leaving the individual a sort of indeterminate clay or a simple bundle of these irreducible drives or tendencies” (Sartre 717). Also, he explains “if the fundamental project [of the individual] is fully experienced by the subject and hence wholly conscious, that certainly does not mean that it must by the same token be known by him; quite the contrary” (Sartre 728-9).

Sartrean existentialism concerns itself with the absence of God as its primary trend. This issue has been reflected in Bach’s depiction of a self-proclamation of Messiah through the view point of the focal character, Donald Shimoda, who assimilates himself with a supernatural guiding power. Bach (2013) once again rejects the possibility of an external spiritual leader, whether in shapes of Prophets or God, by depicting the self-proclamation scene. However, it seems that the writer is experiencing moments of doubt and uncertainty about his denial of supernatural leading powers through the voices of his depicted characters – Donald Shimoda and Richard, as they repeatedly propose: what if somebody came along who could teach us how our world operates and how to control it? The one who knew the real reality. Bach invisibly reveals that there is no God, since no one would come in-person to this world to teach you how to live. The author also reflects upon the Sartrean matter of being as having priority to knowledge in terms of existential philosophy; the novel says: “learning is finding out what you already know”; that doing is demonstrating that you know it, that is becoming who you are in social levels. Bach also refers to the existential idea of human rational superiority; in the novel it is mentioned that “teaching is reminding others that they know just as well as you” (Bach 23).

As an anti-deterministic philosophy, Sartrean existentialism denies the influence of past as a deterministic power; at the same time it concentrates on human being’s dynamic role in life choices and actions towards making meaning out of the chaos with the help of an individual’s free will. The author of *Illusion: The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah* reflects on this issue by proposing: “how about I allow the world to live as it chooses, and I allow me to live as I choose” (Bach 59). Here lies another controversial discussion as a manifestation of Bach’s internal conflict on his dualistic

approach, which tends to disregard the existential superiority of mankind in a world he has been thrown into. As referred to earlier, there are three main divisions of existence: human beings, artifacts, and natural objects, among which for man alone the existence precedes essence. So granting the world with freedom in its living procedure and looking forward to its permission for pursuing a free life connote a sense of dependency and interrelationship between mankind and the external world, which is in contrast to Sartrean theory of existentialism.

Bach, through the characters, reminds the reader of the consequent responsibility one should accept through writing: "in the path of our happiness shall we find the learning for which we have chosen this life time" (Bach 11), this is to say that whatever happens today, is the natural consequence of an individual's choice and will of action. In terms of individual's free will and autonomy, Sartre assumes that being-for-itself is a subjective issue which entails a sense of loss and absurdity, and consequently condemns freedom. Yet, Sartre suggests that the condemned freedom can result in a sensation of happiness, however only when the In-itself is also For-itself.

Significant concept of Alienation, in existentialism, happens in social levels as a result of the twentieth century socio-political events. It seems noteworthy to reflect on Bach's depiction of pilot as an occupation which deals with unlimited vast sky, as a metaphor for illusion and imagination. It is interesting to note that being a pilot connotes a fake sense of superiority over the creatures on the earth, which later on leads to marginalization of God's existence or atheism, as the primary stage in existential alienation. Flying alienates an individual from his earthy fellow men, confusing him with lots of doubts and internal conflicts as a result of alienation from the self and the society. Sasani also depicts the same atmosphere while describing Chekhov and Beckett's characters: "in Chekhov and later on Beckett's plays, when . . . desperation and consequently disappointment reaches to the highest level, the characters doubt about the meaning of life, about their existence and sometimes decide to commit suicide" (228). Bach notes that "the world is a dream, you say, and it's lovely, sometimes. Sunset. Clouds. Sky. No. The image is a dream" (Bach 48). However, a modern notion of social illusion is proposed as a solution for hindering those social contradictions of the modern life. As an existentialist writer, Bach finally clings to fiction, as a vehicle through which he experiences the existential notion of man consisted of many men; multiple beings within an individual: "If you will practice being fictional for a while, you will understand that fictional characters are sometimes more real than people with bodies and heartbeats" (Bach 51). Hence, fiction blurs the boundaries between the two realms of illusion and reality, by switching among many men within an individual.

4. CONCLUSION

Existentialism emerged as a materialistic-based philosophy which sought to question human consciousness through a passive objectifying of an individual. However, Sartrean existentialism has developed a new discussion arguing that every individual is unique in his own experience of living and being, thus, man must be regarded in terms of a non-substantial absolute, an individual in its totality, and not a collage.

It is worth noting that Sartrean existentialism diverged from the general existential mainstream, primarily in its controversial discussion of the human being's existential precedence over the essence. Sartre argued that a man simply exists through living in this world, prior to being (essence - knowledge). Sartre believes in the theory of relativism; his theory tends to challenge the previous nineteenth century notion of the ideal man, as the desired representative of mankind, by proposing that human beings are constituted up of many men or in other words there exists many men within an individual. Sartre introduces human's notion of rationality (reason), by putting it in opposition to the previous glorification of the term, and as being relatively weak and imperfect without considering its non-rational counterpart, to reflect upon the depth of human existence. This way, the two parts must be reunited with the rational part to avoid further fragmentation, since man must be taken in his wholeness, as Sartrean existentialism demands. Sartre argues that it is through an active involvement of both the rational/non-rational parts within an individual that one's true image of self emerges.

As an outcome of the developmental natural science in twentieth century, alienation, estrangement, leads a man to a sense of spiritual barrenness; a feeling of detachment from nature, God and more importantly, from other fellow men and from one's own true self. In the same manner, alienation occurred at social levels, as a result of the depression after the Second World War and the great destructive impacts of the modern industrialization. Sartre brings about the notion of anxiety, a term shifting his philosophy into a new scope, through violating the religiously abstract notions in an individual's moral decision makings towards which man must take full responsibility.

Employing Sartrean existentialism, this paper has studied *Illusions: The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah* in the light of both the individualistic and social aspects of illusion; in other words in the light of the so-called subjective reality. Many psychologists believe that illusions are false ideas of an individual. However, Sartrean existentialism proposes that illusion provides human beings with a way to hinder social and/or personal contradictions a modern man may be faced with. It further reflects upon the phenomenon of social illusion, which is the expression of human essence in action. Social illusion has an ability to adapt an individual to reality in collective social environment and to make resistance possible against the environmental pressures.

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